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REMARKS

The final Office Action issued 15 November 2002 has been reviewed and the comments of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Claims 1-3 and 11-13 have been amended. Thus, claims 1-15 remain pending in the application and are submitted for reconsideration by the Examiner.

Claims 1, 6-10, 12, 14 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by European Patent No. 0 415 489 to Du Pont De Nemours (Du Pont). And claims 2-5, 11 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Du Pont in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,019,521 to Manning et al. (Manning). These rejections are respectfully traversed in view of the above amendments and the following comments.

Independent claims 1, 11, 12, each recite combinations of features that each include "each first projection including a pair of first faces" and each of a pair of grooves "including at least two surfaces slidably confronting respective ones of the pair of first faces and preventing relative displacement of the first and second members perpendicular to the plane." Support for these combinations of feature are found in Applicants' specification as originally filed, for example, at page 5, lines 13-18.

In contrast to the Applicants' claimed combinations of features, Du Pont shows projections 3 that fail to slidably confront respective ones of the pair of C-shaped grooves (not numbered) so as to prevent relative displacement of the first and second members perpendicular to the plane.

Thus, independent claims 1, 11 and 12 are respectfully submitted to be allowable over the applied prior art, and the rejections thereof should be withdrawn.

Manning fails to overcome the deficiencies of Du Pont. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 2-10, 13 and 14 that ultimately depend from claims 1 and 12, respectively, are also submitted to be allowable over the applied prior art, and the rejections thereof should be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests the reconsideration and reexamination of this Application and the prompt allowance of pending

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claims 1-16. Applicant invites the Examiner to contact Applicant's undersigned representative if there are any issues that can be resolved via telephone conference.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached pages are captioned "VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE."

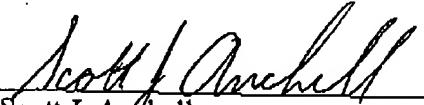
EXCEPT for issue fees payable under 37 C.F.R. §1.18, the Commissioner is hereby authorized by this paper to charge any additional fees during the entire pendency of this application including fees due under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 and 1.17 which may be required, including any required extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0310. This paragraph is intended to be a **CONSTRUCTIVE PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME** in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a)(3).

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 19 February 2003

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Version with Markings to Show Changes Made

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1-3 and 11-13 as follows.

1. (Amended) A system for connecting a male member to a female member, the male and female members being relatively displaceable substantially along an axis lying in a plane, the system comprising:

a pair of first projections each extending parallel to the plane and each having a first end spaced from a second end, each first end being fixed to a first one of the male and female members, and each second end being resiliently movable with respect to the first member, each second end including a first one of a cavity feature and a protrusion feature, and each first projection including a pair of first faces; and

a pair of grooves in a second one of the male and female members, each groove extending parallel to the axis and receiving a respective one of the pair of first projections, and each groove including a second one of the cavity feature and the protrusion feature, the second feature cooperatively engaging the first feature such that the first member is centered about the axis with respect to the second member and such that the first member is retained along the axis with respect to the second member, and each groove including at least two surfaces slidably confronting respective ones of the pair of first faces and preventing relative displacement of the first and second members perpendicular to the plane.

2. (Amended) The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

at least one second projection fixed to the first member and extending parallel to the plane, each second projection [having at least two] including a pair of second faces slidably engaging respective ones of the pair of grooves [the second member; and at least one of the grooves including at least two surfaces confronting respective ones of the at least two faces] and preventing relative displacement of the first and second members perpendicular to the plane.

3. (Amended) The system according to claim 2, wherein there are a pair of the second projections, each of the second projections slidably engaging respective [faces] surfaces of corresponding ones of the pair of grooves.

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11. (Amended) A system for connecting a male member to a female member, the male and female members being relatively displaceable substantially along an axis lying in a plane, the system comprising:

a pair of first projections each extending parallel to the plane and each having a first end spaced from a second end, each first end being fixed to a first one of the male and female members, [and] each second end being resiliently movable with respect to the first member to absorb relative vibration between the male and female members, and each first projection including a pair of first faces;

a pair of grooves in a second one of the male and female members, each groove extending parallel to the axis and receiving a respective one of the pair of first projections, and each groove including at least two surfaces slidably confronting respective ones of the pair of first faces and preventing relative displacement of the first and second members perpendicular to the plane;

a tip formed on each second end and an aperture extending from each groove through the second member, each tip tapering from a first size at least as large as its corresponding aperture to a second size smaller than the corresponding aperture, and each tip cooperatively engaging its corresponding aperture such that the first member is centered about the axis with respect to the second member and such that the first member is retained along the axis with respect to the second member; each tip being visible in its corresponding aperture when the first member is retained along the axis with respect to the second member; and

a pair of second projections fixed to the first member and extending parallel to the plane, each second projection having at least two second faces slidably engaging corresponding surfaces in [each groove] respective ones of the pair of grooves to prevent relative displacement of the first and second members perpendicular to the plane.

12. (Amended) A method of connecting a male member to a female member, the male and female members being relatively displaceable substantially along an axis lying in a plane, the method comprising:

providing a first one of the male and female members with a pair of first projections each extending parallel to the plane and each having a first end spaced from a second end, each first end being fixed to the first member, and each second end being resiliently movable with respect

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to the first member, each second end including a first one of a cavity feature and a protrusion feature, and each first projection including a pair of first faces;

providing a second one of the male and female members with a pair of grooves, each groove extending parallel to the axis and receiving a respective one of the pair of first projections, [and] each groove including a second one of the cavity feature and the protrusion feature, and each groove including at least two surfaces;

aligning the male member with respect to the female member along the axis such that each groove will receive a respective one of the pair of first projections such that each of the first faces slidingly confronts a respective one of the surfaces so as to prevent relative displacement of the first and second members perpendicular to the plane; and

relatively displacing the male member with respect to the female member until the second feature cooperatively engages the first feature such that

the first member is centered about the axis with respect to the second member,

the first member is retained along the axis with respect to the second member, and

relative vibration between the first and second members is absorbed.

13. (Amended) The method according to claim 12, further comprising;

providing the first member with a pair of second projections extending parallel to the plane, each second projection [having at least two] including a pair of second faces [confronting the second member; wherein relatively displacing includes the at least two faces one of the grooves] slidingly engaging respective [surfaces of the groove] ones of the pair of grooves such that the first and second members are prevented from relative displacement perpendicular to the plane.